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BATMAN
DARK KNIGHT Dark City
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DARK KNIGHT, DARK CITY

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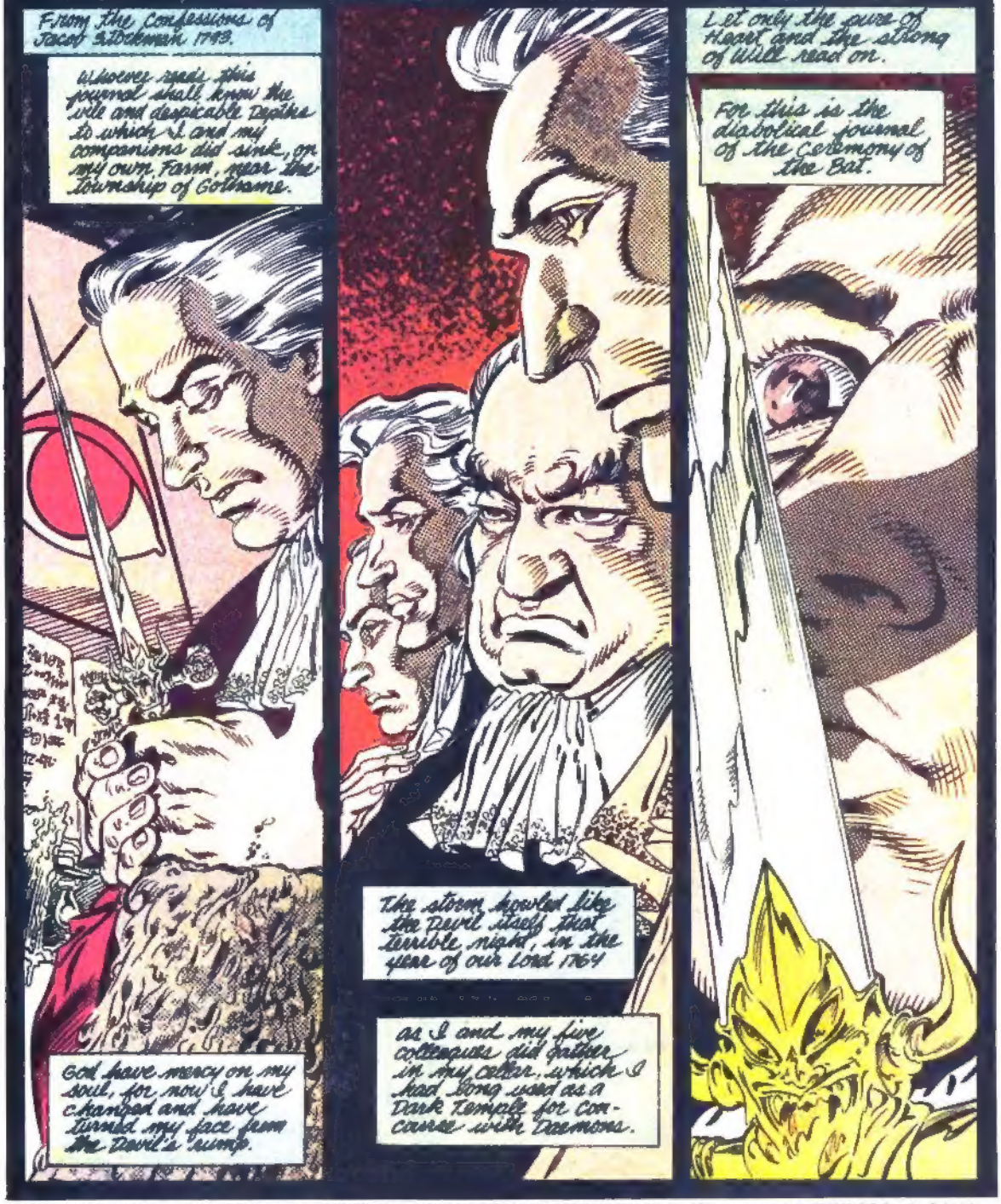
From the Confessions of Jacob Blackman 1769.
Whoever reads this journal shall know the vile and despicable depths to which I and my companions did sink, on my own Farm, near the township of Gotham.
God have mercy on my soul, for now I have changed and have turned my face from the Devil's lump.
The storm howled like the Devil itself that terrible night, in the year of our Lord 1764
as I and my five colleagues did gather in my cellar, which I had long used as a Dark Temple for communion with Daemons.
Let only the pure of Heart and the strong of Will read on.
For this is the diabolical journal of the Ceremony of the Bat.

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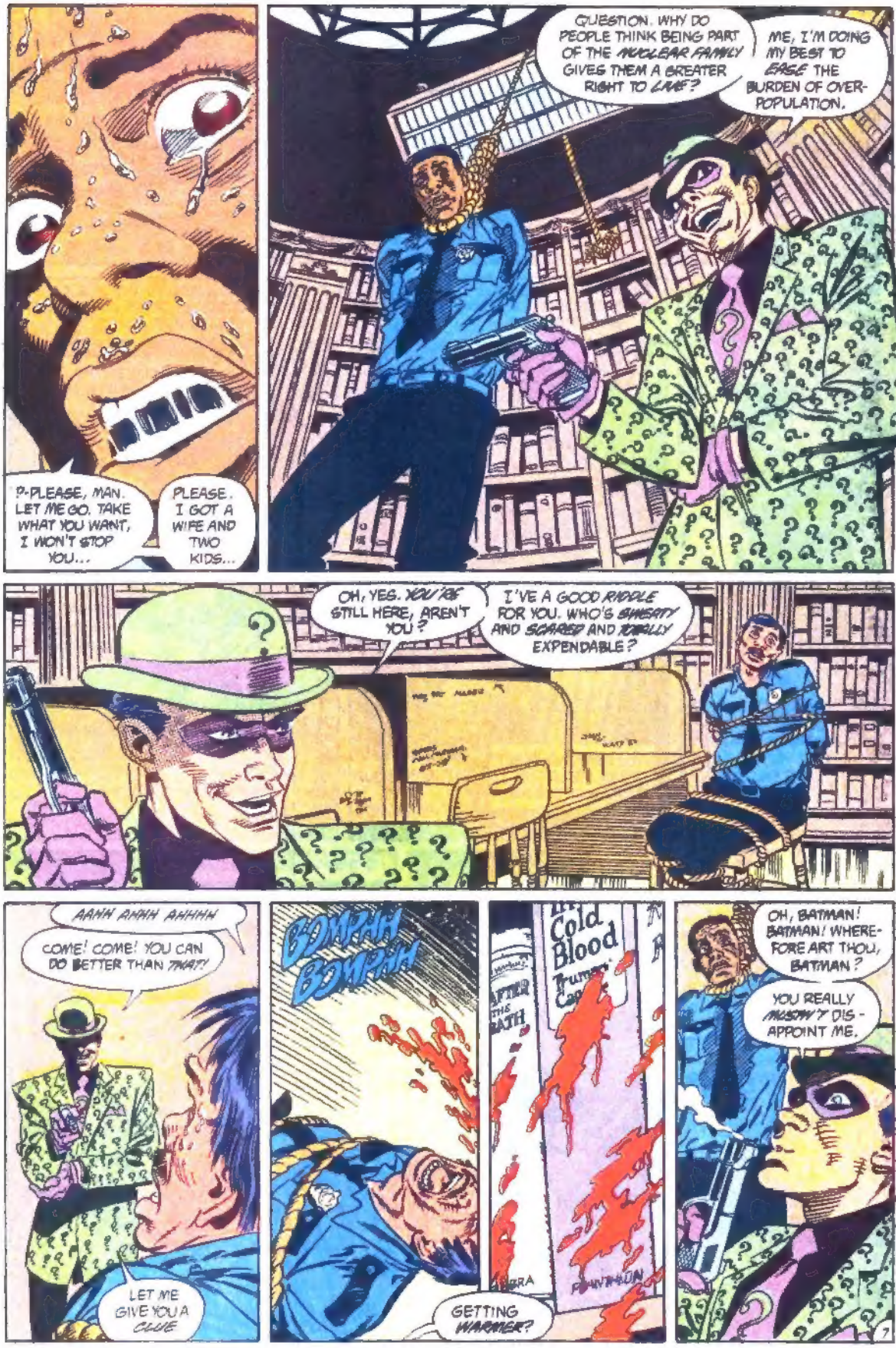
We had summoned the Daemon, calling itself BARBATHOS, using spells laid out elsewhere in this journal.
Now the slaying of the Sacrificial Victim was all that stood between us and the complete and utter control of the Daemon, may God Save us All.
Mr. Thomas Jefferson, who has since risen well in the world of politicking, did lead the Sacrificial Victim into the Temple.
Her eyes were like two unseeing moons, her mind deadened by the potions we had administered. She was ready.
The girl, the Human Bait, had undergone the Prescribed steps of preparation necessary for her to be sacrificed, and thus make the Daemon our servant.
Horrible indeed were those preparations. Horrible indeed was the silence, broken only by the distant storm that settled in the chamber.
As the girl climbed obediently onto the Black Altar,
And I raised the Sacrificial Knife above her waiting Young heart.
2

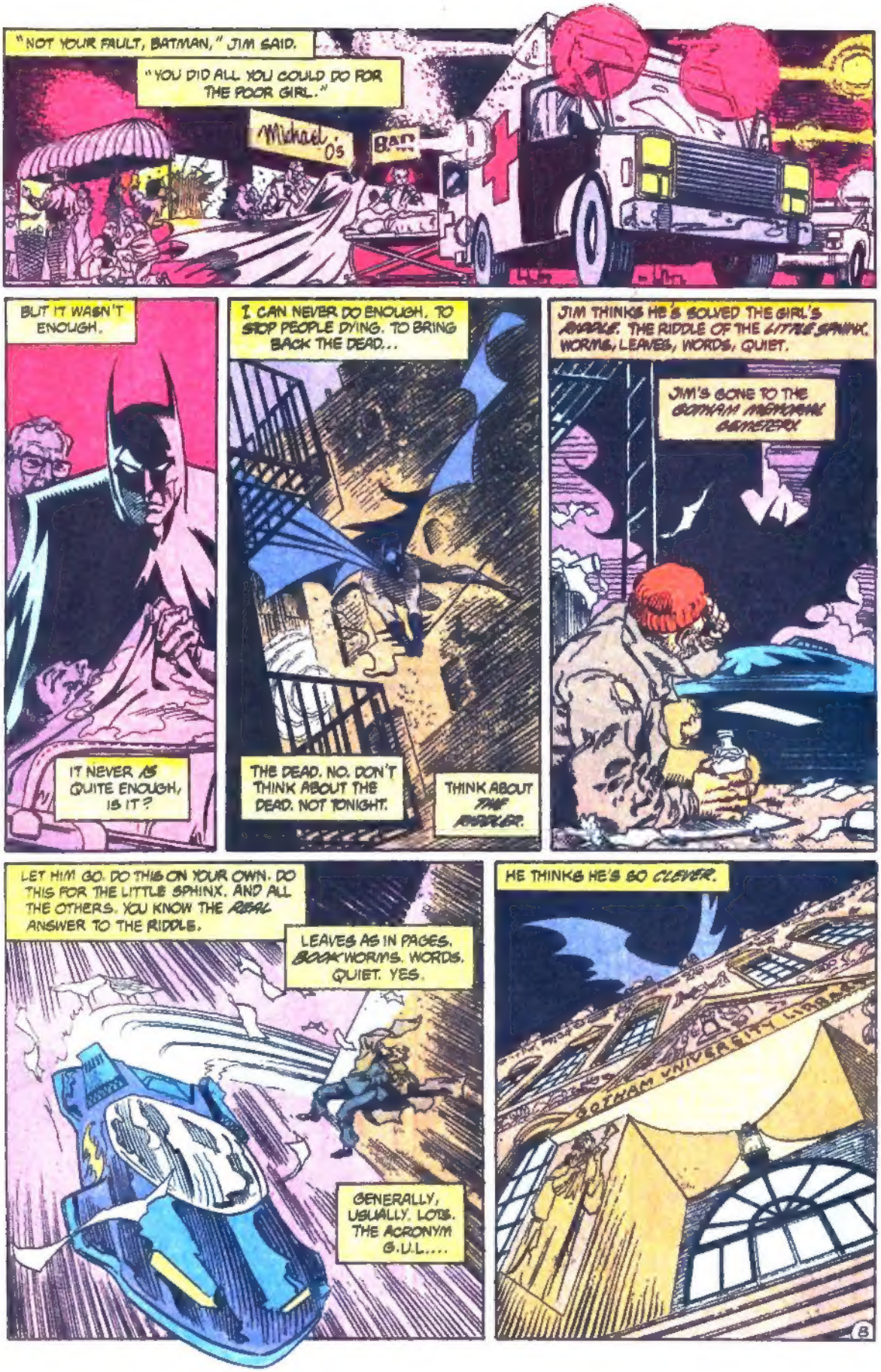
A thing of the night.
Like a thing of the night.
He moves.
He glides.
Lightly for such a large man.
Silently.
His footing sure, his eyes keen.
Feel him, his boots barely touching the wall.
From below, just a *shadow*...
passing across the face of a building.
He has an assignation. He has been *summoned*.
It is beginning, again.
Yes, come. We are *together*. Really, we are one. It is beginning again.
It has *begun*.
You are the *Batman*...
HELLO, JIM.
ARE YOU SURE IT'S HIM?
3

I AM GOTHAM...
HE GAVE THE CORRECT CODEWORD. THEY ALL HAVE CODEWORDS NOWADAYS. DISTINGUISH THEM FROM THE CRANK CALLS.
HIS CODEWORD IS OEDIPUS. THAT WAS MY IDEA.
OEDIPUS, SOLVER OF THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX.
INAPPROPRIATE, WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT. AND MEDICAL RECORDS SUGGEST THE RIDDLER ACTUALLY MATED HIS MOTHER.
WHAT DOES HE WANT?
DON'T KNOW. SAID BE HERE AT MIDNIGHT AND I'D FIND OUT. SAID THE NAMELESS MAN HAD TO BE HERE TOO.
THAT'S HIS CODE-WORD FOR YOU, BY THE WAY, I THOUGHT...
JIM, SOMEONE'S UP HERE WITH US...
CAN'T BE. I HAD THE PLACE CAMPAIGNED, MY BOYS...
SOMEONE'S UP HERE WITH US.
4

GENERALLY MY LEAVES AREN'T TURNED AT NIGHT...
USUALLY I'M FULL OF WORMS BY DAY...
LOTS OF WORDS BUT DEATHLY QUIET...
LADY, GET OFF THE EDGE. IT'S A TWENTY FLOOR DROP...
DON'T THINK SHE CAN HEAR YOU, JIM...
LOOK AT THE EYES.
GENERALLY MY LEAVES AREN'T TURNED AT NIGHT
USUALLY I'M FULL OF WORMS BY DAY
LOTS OF WORDS BUT DEATHLY QUIET...
HYPNOTIZED OR DRUGGED. PROBABLY BOTH. MOUTHPIECE FOR THE RIDDLER. HEAD OF A WOMAN, BODY OF A LION. A LITTLE SPHINX.
HE THINKS HE'S SO CLEVER...
OKAY. THAT'S VERY NICE. NOW JUST STAY WHERE YOU ARE.
STAY EXACTLY WHERE YOU ARE...
BATMAN?
I CAN FLY, BATMAN...
SEE?
NO!
5

NO. NO. NO..
AAAGGHH
NO!
RISTORA


?-PLEASE, MAN. LET ME GO. TAKE WHAT YOU WANT, I WON'T STOP YOU...
PLEASE. I GOT A WIFE AND TWO KIDS...
QUESTION. WHY DO PEOPLE THINK BEING PART OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY GIVES THEM A GREATER RIGHT TO LIVE?
ME, I'M DOING MY BEST TO EASE THE BURDEN OF OVER-POPULATION.
OH, YES. YOU'RE STILL HERE, AREN'T YOU?
I'VE A GOOD RIDDLE FOR YOU. WHO'S SWEATY AND SCARED AND TOTALLY EXPENDABLE?
AAHH AHHH AHHHH
COME! COME! YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT!
LET ME GIVE YOU A CLUE
BOMPAH BOMPAH
Cold Blood
GETTING WARMER?
OH, BATMAN! BATMAN! WHEREFORE ART THOU, BATMAN?
YOU REALLY MUSN'T DIS-APPOINT ME.
7

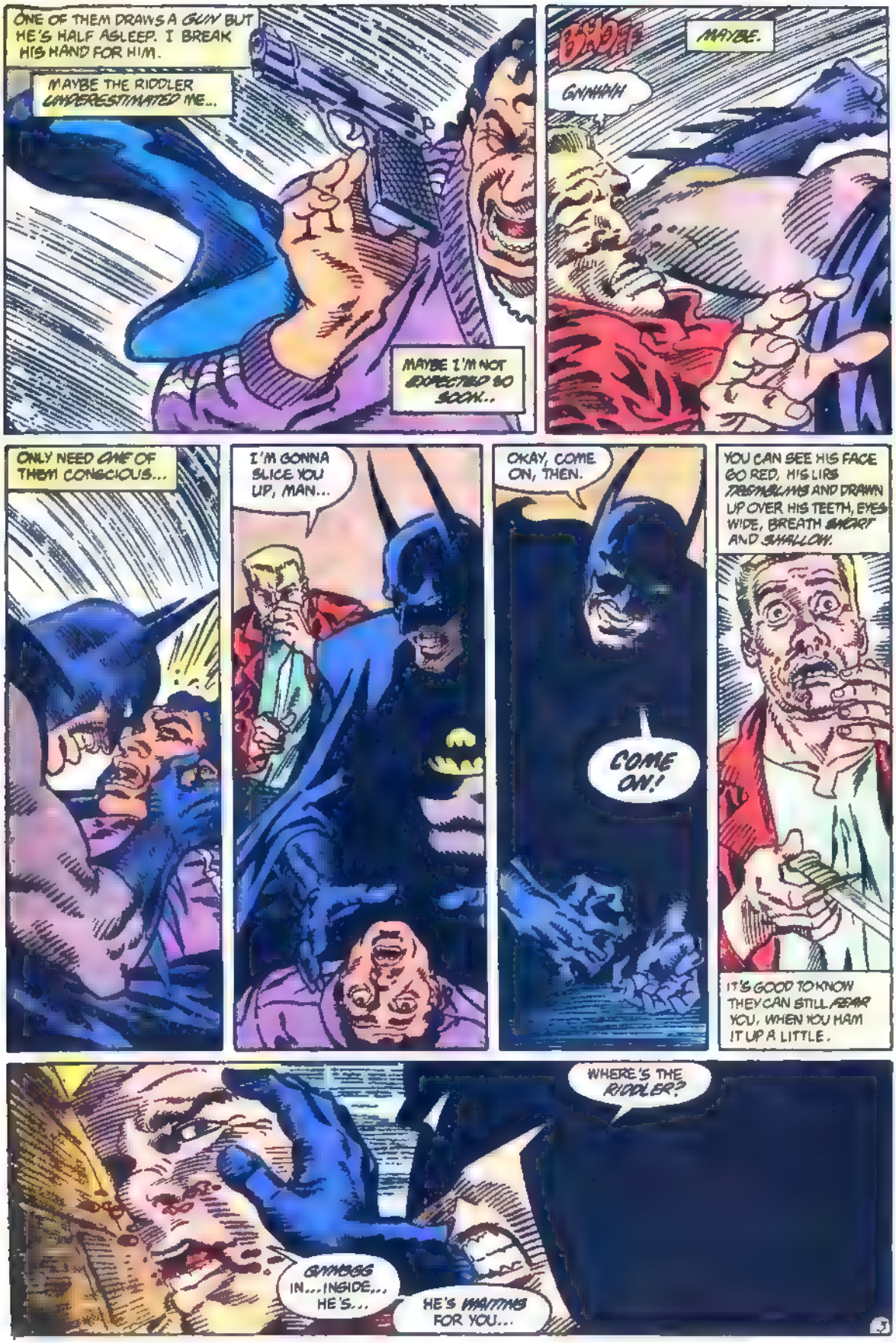

"NOT YOUR FAULT, BATMAN," JIM SAID.
"YOU DID ALL YOU COULD DO FOR THE POOR GIRL."
Michael's
BAR
BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH.
IT NEVER IS QUITE ENOUGH, IS IT?
I CAN NEVER DO ENOUGH. TO STOP PEOPLE DYING. TO BRING BACK THE DEAD...
THE DEAD. NO. DON'T THINK ABOUT THE DEAD. NOT TONIGHT.
THINK ABOUT THE RIDDLER.
JIM THINKS HE'S SOLVED THE GIRL'S RIDDLE. THE RIDDLE OF THE LITTLE SPHINX. WORMS, LEAVES, WORDS, QUIET.
JIM'S GONE TO THE GOTHAM MEMORIAL GATEFOLD
LET HIM GO. DO THIS ON YOUR OWN. DO THIS FOR THE LITTLE SPHINX. AND ALL THE OTHERS. YOU KNOW THE REAL ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE.
LEAVES AS IN PAGES. BOOKWORMS. WORDS. QUIET. YES.
GENERALLY, USUALLY, LOTS. THE ACRONYM G.U.L....
HE THINKS HE'S SO CLEVER.
GOTHAM UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
8

I could feel the soft resistance of her skin, her young breast, her beating heart, before even the point of the dagger drew blood.
Now, I said. Now. Now. Now...
NO!
GOOD GOD, STOCKMAN. THIS HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH!
FAR ENOUGH, THOMAS?
YOU KNOW FOR THE DAEMON TO BE OURS THERE MUST BE A SACRIFICE...
A SYMBOLIC SACRIFICE. I ALWAYS THOUGHT...
IF YOU'D PARTAKEN IN HER PREPARATION YOU'D HAVE BEEN LEFT IN NO DOUBT THAT HER SACRIFICE WOULD BE REAL ENOUGH, MR. JEFFERSON.
IT'S TOO LATE, THOMAS. THE DAEMON HAS BEEN SUMMONED. WE MUST CONTROL IT OR...
My hand shakes as I write, though near thirty years have elapsed. What sound was it that made me halt in mid-breath? No sound of this world. No sound from the mouth of any creature of God...
DEAR LORD, IT'S THE DAEMON! OUTSIDE THE DOOR OF THE TEMPLE!
WE'RE TOO LATE!
Mr. Jefferson, in his frenzied desire to be away, bounded towards the door, shrieking in the most fearful manner...
He threw open the door to the dark night.
The rest was madness...

I FIND HIM IN THE MAIN READING ROOM. I TAKE A DEEP BREATH, TRY NOT TO SHOW THE LITTLE LUNATIC HE'S GOT ME WORRIED.
WELL DONE BATMAN. YOU'VE SOLVED MY LITTLE RIDDLE. I HOPE YOU FOUND MY PRETTY SAWINXETTE APPEALING
OF COURSE, SHE'D BEEN PROGRAMMED TO TAKE A JUMP AS SOON AS SHE'D GIVEN YOU THE RIDDLE.
DON'T TRY NOTHING, BATMAN. BOOKS GONNA GIVE ANY MINUTE. ONE SHOVE AND I'M OVER...
LIFE'S FULL OF QUESTIONS, ISN'T IT, BATMAN. THOUGH NATURALLY I PREFER TO THINK OF THEM AS RIDDLES.
HERE'S A GOOD ONE...
IF I KNOCK THE BOOKS FROM UNDER THIS POOR MAN'S FEET, DO YOU GET TO HIM IN TIME?
KAFKA THE TRIAL
OR DOES HE CHOKE TO DEATH?
I WONDER...
NO!
SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT
KAFKA THE TRIAL
10

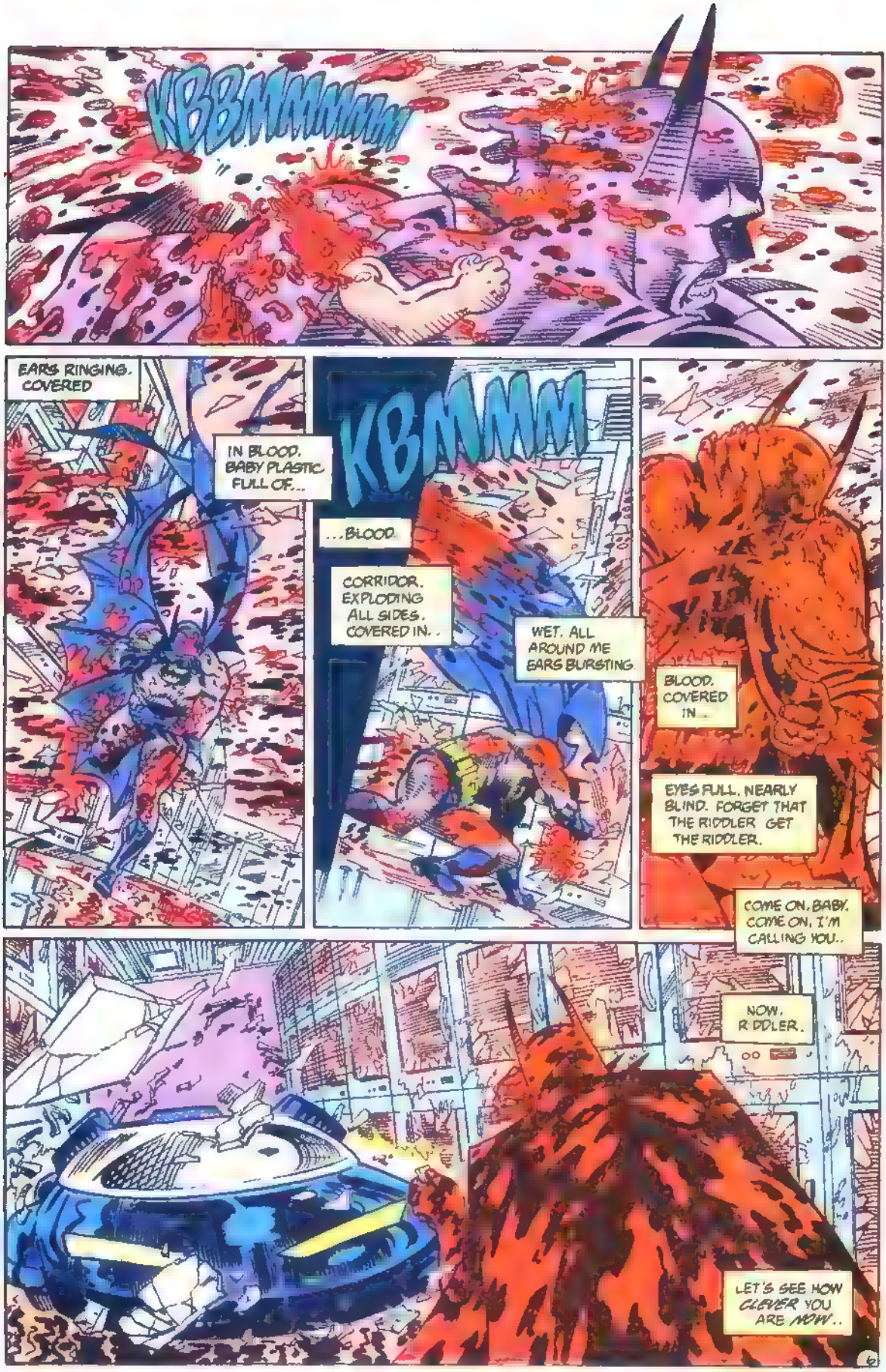
THE ROPE IS CUT.
BUT IN TIME?
FROM THE CORNER OF MY EYE I SEE THE RIDDLER LEAVING, SMILING LIKE THE MAN IN THE MOON. WHY?
WHY NOT ATTACK ME? WHY TRY TO KILL THIS MAN?
WHY GIVE ME THE CHANCE TO SAVE HIM?
TO BREATHE MY OWN BREATH INTO HIS LUNGS.
TWENTY MINUTES LATER I'M AT THE HOSPITAL. TWO BLOCKS AWAY. THEY SAY THE SECURITY GUARD WILL LIVE BUT HIS SPINAL CORD IS SEVERED.
THEN I SEE THE POLICE OFFICERS...
FOUR BABIES STOLEN AT GUNPOINT. BABIES! ALL ONE WEEK OLD.
NONE OF 'EM GOT RICH DADDIES OR NOTHING. JUST TAKEN AT RANDOM WHAT'S THIS DAMN COUNTRY COMING TO, EH?
ONE OF THE GUNMEN LEFT THIS CASSETTE
A1 THE HANGING MAN
SO CLEVER. HE JUST LOVES BEING CLEVER.

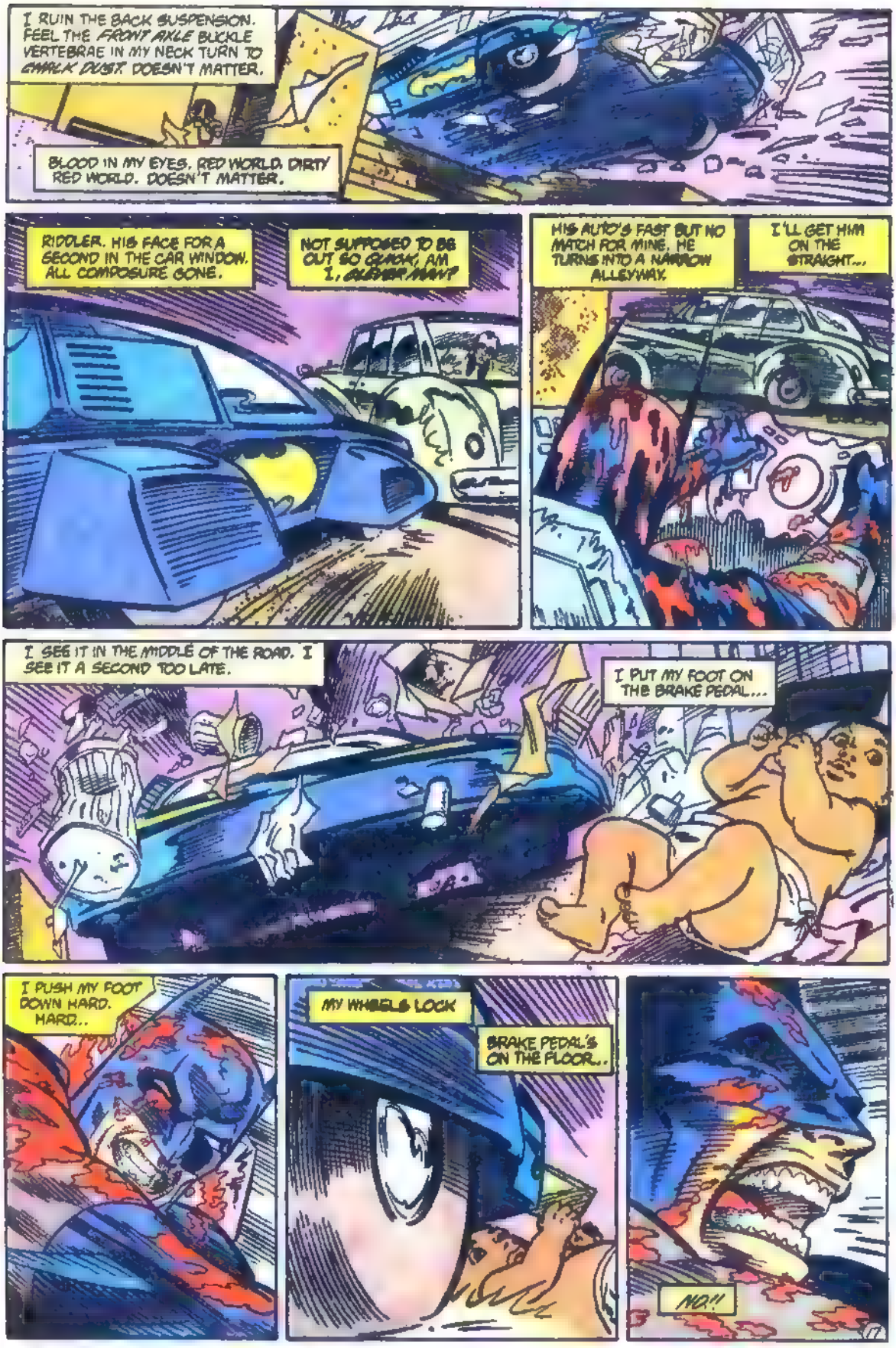
I'M A BANK WITH NO MONEY
BUT I'VE ALL DIFFERENT TYPES...
CLUNK
A BANK WITH NO MONEY. ALL DIFFERENT TYPES.
HE'S NOT MAKING IT TOO HARD FOR ME.
I GO FOR THE BIGGEST BANK IN TOWN. NOT FAR FROM THE HOSPITAL.
NO MONEY IN THIS BANK BUT LOTS OF TYPES. OR GROUPS. O POSITIVE A RHESUS NEGATIVE...
WEST GOTHAM BLOOD TRANSFUSION CENTER
GUYS HANGING AROUND THE BACK OF THE BUILDING. WEARING THEIR GUILT LIKE DIRTY RAINCOATS. NONE OF THIS MAKES SENSE
EXIT
WHAT DOES THE RIDDLER WANT? CAN'T BE MONEY. HE CAN'T WANT NEWBORN BABIES.
STARTING TO FEEL LIKE A RAT.
A RAT, RUNNING THROUGH A LABORATORY MAZE
MAYBE THE RIDDLER WANTS ME
HE'S GOING TO GET ME.
12


ONE OF THEM DRAWS A GUN BUT HE'S HALF ASLEEP. I BREAK HIS HAND FOR HIM.
MAYBE THE RIDDLER UNDERESTIMATED ME...
MAYBE I'M NOT EXPECTED SO SOON...
BHOF
MAYBE.
GNNHAH
ONLY NEED ONE OF THEM CONSCIOUS...
I'M GONNA SLICE YOU UP, MAN...
OKAY, COME ON, THEN.
COME ON!
YOU CAN SEE HIS FACE GO RED, HIS LIPS TRISMALUMS AND DRAWN UP OVER HIS TEETH, EYES WIDE, BREATH SHORT AND SHALLOW.
IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THEY CAN STILL FEAR YOU, WHEN YOU HAM IT UP A LITTLE.
WHERE'S THE RIDDLER?
GNNGGS IN...INSIDE... HE'S...
HE'S WAITING FOR YOU...

PALE BLUE LIGHTING. THE VAGUE SMELL OF DISINFECTANT. THE CORRIDORS SILENT BUT FOR THE SOUND OF MY OWN FOOTSTEPS.
I THINK OF THE MAZE AGAIN. THE LABYRINTH I...
...HELL.
CAN'T SHAKE THIS FEELING. SOMETHING'S WATCHING ME.
NOT THE RIDDLER. SOMETHING ELSE. SOMETHING WATCHING.
SOMETHING WAITING.
YOO HOO! BATMAN! I'M UP HERE!
AND LOOK WHAT I'VE FOUND UNDER THE GOOSEBERRY BUSH!
GIVE ME THE CHILD, RIDDLER. YOU CAN GO, OR WE CAN TALK. JUST GIVE ME THE CHILD...
OH, SUIT YOURSELF, THEN.
CATCH!
MOVE. COME ON. MOVE.
FASTER...
GET IT GET IT GET IT
NO!!!

THANK GOD. I FEEL THE BABY...
IN MY ARMS.
CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THE RIDDLER, LEAVING...
WHOMP
IT'S WORTH A TRY
AIEEEE...
TOO CASUAL, RIDDLER.
I'VE CAUGHT YOU AND THE...
WHO'S A SILLY BOY, THEN?
BABY...
WHO'S A SILLY BOY, THEN?
WHO'S A SILLY...
DUMMY


KBBMMMMMM
EARS RINGING. COVERED
IN BLOOD. BABY PLASTIC FULL OF...
KBMMM
...BLOOD
CORRIDOR. EXPLODING ALL SIDES. COVERED IN..
WET. ALL AROUND ME EARS BURSTING
BLOOD. COVERED IN..
EYES FULL. NEARLY BLIND. FORGET THAT THE RIDDLER GET THE RIDDLER.
COME ON, BABY. COME ON, I'M CALLING YOU..
NOW, RIDDLER.
LET'S SEE HOW CLEVER YOU ARE NOW..


I RUIN THE BACK SUSPENSION. FEEL THE FRONT AXLE BUCKLE VERTEBRAE IN MY NECK TURN TO CHALK DUST. DOESN'T MATTER.
BLOOD IN MY EYES. RED WORLD. DIRTY RED WORLD. DOESN'T MATTER.
RIDDLER. HIS FACE FOR A SECOND IN THE CAR WINDOW. ALL COMPOSURE GONE.
NOT SUPPOSED TO BE OUT SO CRACK, AM I, RUBBER MAN?
HIS AUTO'S FAST BUT NO MATCH FOR MINE. HE TURNS INTO A NARROW ALLEYWAY.
I'LL GET HIM ON THE STRAIGHT...
I SEE IT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD. I SEE IT A SECOND TOO LATE.
I PUT MY FOOT ON THE BRAKE PEDAL...
I PUSH MY FOOT DOWN HARD. HARD..
MY WHEELS LOCK
BRAKE PEDAL'S ON THE FLOOR..
NO!!

THE CAR COMES TO A HALT. I HOLD MY BREATH. I'D FELT THE BUMP. THE SICKENING BUMP, SOMETHING SCRAPING UNDER THE CAR.
TRY TO SHAKE FROM MY MIND THE MIXTURE SOFT BABY FLESH, SHARP METAL, TARMAC...
THEN I HEAR A CRY. A SINGLE CRY.
A SINGLE, BEAUTIFUL, WONDERFUL CRY...
AND I'D FEEL LIKE CRYING MYSELF...
IF I HADN'T STOPPED CRYING YEARS AGO.
BABY AND I HOLD EACH OTHER AND I LOOK AT THE CAR. FRONT AXLE SCRAPING THE ROAD. THE BUMP? HAH HAH.
RIDDLER, WHAT GAME ARE WE PLAYING? WHAT ARE THE RULES?
WHAT'S THE PRIZE?
WHAT IF I LOSE?
IT'S OKAY, SWEETHEART. YOU'RE OKAY NOW.
WHERE'S HE TAKEN YOUR PALS, HUH?
YOU GOT SOMETHING? LET ME SEE.
SURPRISE, SURPRISE.
8

A MAN IS ALMOST HANGED IN A LIBRARY. RIDDLER GIVES ME THE CHANCE TO SAVE HIM.
FOUR ONE WEEK-OLD-BABIES ABDUCTED. A RIDDLE LEADS ME TO A BLOOD BANK.
INSTEAD HE JUST SHOWERS ME WITH BLOOD.
THEN HE LETS ME HAVE ONE OF THE KIDS BACK...
...WITH MY CODEWORD CARD, THE HANGING MAN. AND A RIDDLE ON THE BACK OF IT.
"I'VE STILL THREE BRATS, SO PLUMP AND ROUND.
"HEY, BATS, LET RIP AS IN BYRON'S PARISINA.
"SEEK OUT--LESS OFTEN SOUGHT THAN FOUND."
HE'S GIVING ME THE RUNAROUND. MAYBE THERE'S NO PURPOSE. JUST TRYING TO MAKE ME LOOK STUPID.
NO. THAT'S NOT ENOUGH.
SEEK OUT. LESS OFTEN SOUGHT THAN FOUND...
THERE'S ANOTHER THING. ALL NIGHT, I'VE HAD THIS FEELING. I'M BEING WATCHED, EVERYWHERE I GO...
AND I'M IN A MAZE. I'M BEING WATCHED AND I'M IN A MAZE. A VERY CLEVER MAZE.
"A MAZE THAT'S LEADING ME RIGHT WHERE IT WANTS TO..."

OF COURSE! HOW COULD I BE SO STUPID! LORD BYRON'S POEM, PARISINA!
THE LINE AFTER "SEEK OUT--LESS SOUGHT THAN FOUND"? IS "A SOLDIER'S GRAVE, FOR THEE THE BEST."
AND IT'S NOT LET RIP. IT'S LET R.I.P. REST IN PEACE.
A SOLDIER'S GRAVE. SOLDIER...
SOLDIER. ARMY. MILITARY. R.I.P. GRAVE...
THE GOTHAM MILITARY CEMETERY!
ALFRED, YOU'RE A GENIUS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE RIDDLER WANTS, BUT I'VE GOT TO KEEP FOLLOWING. I'VE GOT TO GET THOSE BABIES BACK.
I'VE GOT TO GET TO THE END OF THE MAZE.
ABSOLUTELY.
AND I'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF PREPARING YOUR APPAREL..
I TAKE IT IT'S EVENING WEAR TONIGHT, SIR?
20

The night is *dark*. It should be. It should be very dark.
The soil is damp.
The scent of flowers. Some fresh. Some not so fresh.
Hark! There. Listen. Between the wind. Between the restless bushes.
A footstep on gravel. Soft as breath.
Light as death. He walks
by the stones.
From somewhere comes a dislocated cry.
He stops. Listens. But it's nothing. Only the night.
And the night is dark. The night is mine.
The night is ours.
The night is ours, Batman.
Batman...

THE NIGHT IS OURS.
CONTINUED...